



New York State West Youth Soccer Association Zero Tolerance Policy

New York State West Youth Soccer Association (hereafter referred to as NYSWYSA) has adopted a Zero Tolerance Policy in order to establish professional, behavioral expectations for Parents/Spectators, Staff, Coaches, Bench Personnel, Club Volunteers, Players and Referees as well as help prevent verbal abuse and physical assault during NYSWYSA sanctioned League and Club events. This includes games, tournaments, festivals, practices, tryouts, and any other sanctioned League or Club event.

NYSWYSA is and will always be, a place where all races, genders, ethnicities, religion and sexual orientations can come together and feel welcome to enjoy the game of soccer, compete and grow/develop together. NYSWYSA maintains the highest standards and all our players, parents, spectators, volunteers, coaches, and referees are expected to demonstrate a professional level of respect and sportsmanship.

Abusive and obscene language, violent play/conduct, fighting, sarcasm, taunting and other behavior deemed detrimental to the game will not be tolerated and may already be addressed under the Laws of the Game, Prohibited Conduct policy and/or MAAPP policy. This also includes unnecessary and unwarranted physical contact between adult participants and minor players. Physical contact should be limited to professional and/or approved instructional techniques, acts of sportsmanship or the need to render physical aid. The ultimate responsibility for the actions of the aforementioned groups resides with NYSWYSA member Leagues, Clubs and the WNY Referee Association.

Additionally, the use of racial epithets and racially offensive language has no place in NYSWYSA sanctioned events. Use of racial epithets and other insensitive language is especially harmful to members of underrepresented groups. Permitting such language is especially harmful to the culture of respect, dignity and belonging that NYSWYSA strives to create during and at all sanctioned events. As such, these acts specifically fall under the Prohibited Conduct policy and shall be governed according to the US Soccer Severity of Misconduct Matrix.

It is the responsibility of the Club coaches and bench personnel to provide positive referee support and spectator control. And it is the responsibility of NYSWYSA member clubs to provide instructions to their coaches and bench personnel on managing these expectations. This Zero Tolerance policy applies before, during and after all NYSWYSA sanctioned events which includes the venue, pitch, and its immediate surrounding areas.

Policy Violations – Expectations & Penalties

Parents & Spectators

Expectations

Parents and spectators shall not persistently address the referee or assistant referees at any time during a match. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Disputing calls during or after the match.
- b. Making remarks to the referee(s) or advising the referee(s) on how to administer the match.
- c. Negatively addressing the referee(s) with actions that include yelling, criticism, sarcasm, harassment, intimidation, or feedback of any kind before, during or after the match.

Any complaints about match officiating shall be lodged with the head coach and/or Club who will coordinate any such concerns with the league and/or referee assignor.

The only allowable exceptions to the above are:

- a. Responding to a referee who has initiated a conversation, until such time as the referee terminates the conversation.
- b. Pointing out an emergency or safety issue, such as a player apparently injured on the field or observed fighting.

Parents and spectators shall not negatively address players of either team to include criticism, sarcasm, harassment, intimidation, or negative, non-constructive feedback of any kind before, during or after the match.

Penalties

As per the Laws of the Game and in the opinion of the assigned referee, depending on the severity of the offense, the referee may take any of the following actions:

- a. The referee may issue a verbal warning and/or the appropriate caution/ejection to the coach of the offending party's team.
- b. The referee may stop the match and instruct the coaches to direct the parent or spectator to leave the field and spectator area.
- c. The referee may abandon the game if the parent or spectator does not leave the field and spectator area.

Players

Expectations

The general conduct of the players is governed by the Laws of the Game as stated by FIFA, US Soccer and US Youth Soccer. Penalties for routine violations are determined by the Laws of the Game.

Penalties

Additional penalties for routine player violations or misconduct may be administered by the League, Club and/or NYSWYSA as determined by cause but in no case will be less severe than the established penalties as defined by FIFA, US Soccer, US Youth Soccer and NYSWYSA.

Player Conduct is now also governed by the current NYSWYSA Prohibited Conduct policy and MAAPP where applicable.

Coaches, Assistant Coaches & Bench Personnel

Expectations

It is the responsibility of all coaches, assistant coaches, and bench personnel to maintain the highest standards of conduct for themselves, their players and supporters in all matches. Failure to do so undermines the referee's authority and the integrity of the game resulting in a hostile environment for players, the referee(s), coaches, assistant coaches, bench personnel and spectators.

As role models for all the participants and spectators, all coaches and bench personnel participating in a NYSWYSA sanctioned event are expected to be supportive of, and to acknowledge the effort, good play, and sportsmanship on the part of ALL players from either team in a contest.

By example, coaches, assistant coaches, and bench personnel are expected to show that although they are competing in a game, they have respect for their opponent, referees, and spectators always. NYSYISA will not tolerate negative behavior exhibited either by demonstrative actions and gestures, or by ill-intentioned remarks, including those addressed toward the referees or members of an opposing team.

Coaches exhibiting hostile, negative, sarcastic, or otherwise ill-intended behavior toward referees, opposing players or coaches will be subject to sanction by the assigned referee(s). Additional sanctions may be imposed by the Club that the coach, assistant coach or bench personnel represent; the League that the match is being played under; or by NYSWYSA governing policies after a review of the match report and/or witness statements.

Additional Expectations (Coaches/Bench Personnel)

- a. All should be aware that according to the current Laws of the Game, any person in the technical area can be shown yellow and/or red cards by the referee.
- b. All shall not interact directly or indirectly with the coaches or players of the opposing team during the game in any manner that may be construed as negative, hostile, or sarcastic either by way of demonstrative actions and gestures or by ill-intentioned remarks.
- c. All shall not offer dissent to any call made by the referee(s). Requests for call clarification should instead be referred to the League after the match which can then be addressed by the referee assignor.

The only allowable exceptions to the above are:

- a. Responding to a referee who has initiated a conversation.
- b. Pointing out emergency or safety issues.
- c. Making substitutions.
- d. Inquiring as to the proper restart.
- e. Asking for the time remaining in a half at the discretion of the referee.

Coaches, Assistant Coaches & Bench Personnel (Cont.)

Head Coaches

Allowed to ask a referee after a game or during the halftime interval, in a polite and constructive way, to explain a law or foul, however the opinion of the referee will prevail.

The following will also apply:

- a. Polite and friendly concerns can be exchanged with the referee. If the polite tone of the conversation changes, the referee may abandon the exchange at any time.
- b. Sarcasm, harassment, or intimidation is subject to caution and/or ejection per the Laws of the Game.
- c. Interpretative conversation with the referee at the conclusion of the match is ultimately at the discretion of the referee.

Penalties

In the opinion of the referee and in accordance with the Laws of the Game, depending on the severity of the offense, the referee may take any of the following actions:

- a. Issuing a verbal warning to the offending coach, assistant coach or bench personnel.
- b. Issuing a yellow card caution to the offending coach, assistant coach or bench personnel.
- c. Ejecting (red card violation) the offending coach, assistant coach, or bench personnel. Once ejected, the individual will be required to leave the field and immediate area without delay.
- d. Issuing a verbal warning, yellow card caution and/or a red card ejection to the head coach for any violation found under the Parents/Spectators section if they cannot or are unwilling to control Parents/Spectators and the sideline.
- e. Abandoning the game if the coach, assistant coach, or bench personnel do not leave the field or any immediate adjoining area after having been instructed to do so.
- f. Abandoning the game immediately if there are any uncontrolled threats of violence or other conditions that are deemed to be immediate precursors to violence and then initiate a call to 911 for assistance.

Additional penalties associated with the ejection of a coach, assistant coach or bench personnel may be assessed by the local club or league which sanctioned the match in accordance with their documented policy. These penalties may be no less stringent than sanctions as may be imposed by NYSWYSA following their review, if conducted, of the incident.

Referee Abuse or Assault

All cases of alleged referee abuse or assault shall be reported to NYSWYSA and the State Referee Administrator within 24 hours of occurrence.

NYSWYSA will then investigate said complaint(s), taking the appropriate actions as indicated within the current US Soccer MAAPP, Prohibited Conduct Policy, US Soccer Policy 531-9 governing conduct towards referees and this Zero Tolerance Policy.

Per US Soccer Policy 531-9, misconduct against referees may occur before, during, and/or after the match, specifically when the referee arrives at and/or departs the venue. Misconduct may also occur at later times when the actions taken against the referee directly relates to the duties of a match affiliated with US Soccer, US Youth Soccer and/or NYSWYSA sanctioned matches.

For the purposes of this Zero Tolerance Policy Section 3-a of Policy 531-9 shall also apply to which it covers the referee and/or any “protected party” with the referee (IE: parent, family member) from the time they arrive at the venue, including the parking area and until their departure. The following serve as definitions of Referee Abuse and Referee Assault:

Referee Abuse

Referee Abuse is extreme, deliberate, non-contact behavior that causes the referee and/or their “protected party” significant harm to include emotional abuse.

Referee Assault

Referee Assault is any deliberate physical action against the referee and/or their “protected party.”

Examples of Abuse & Assault

Actions in this category may be subject to an immediate suspension meaning that the perpetrator’s risk management status will be suspended immediately pending investigation and subsequent outcome. Abuse and Assault include but are not limited to, the following actions or behavior against a referee and/or their “protected party.”

- a. Imposing physical harm, including the use of objects or equipment.
- b. Any act that endangers the physical or mental well-being, whether it be deliberate or merely reckless.
- c. Any form of unwanted physical contact, including but not limited to pushing, hitting, striking, kicking, choking and/or spitting.
- d. Any behavior that constitutes a criminal offense.
- e. Threatening either directly or by insinuation, physical harm including the use of objects. A threat is defined as any statement or action that instills a reasonable fear of acts of violence to a person’s safety or property.
- f. Threats of general harm or any retaliatory action, including exclusions from assignment or future participation opportunities.

Actions that do not meet the above abuse or assault definitions but cause the referee or their “protected party” harm may be subject to the US Soccer gross mistreatment framework. Gross mistreatment includes but is not limited to the following actions or behaviors:

- a. Severe or repeated harassment, including hate speech or discriminatory remarks based on race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, disabilities, or any other legally protected characteristic.
- b. Extreme verbal attacks that would cause emotional harm to a reasonable person.
- c. Approaching a referee with intimidation and/or aggression when they are arriving or departing a venue.
- d. Any form of cyberbullying, including the spreading of false information about the referee, sharing the referee’s personal information, or publicly posting content that ridicules or mocks the referee or uses hate speech.
- e. Questioning the referee’s character, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, or impartiality without substantive proof or cause.
- f. Yelling insults, taunting, making or expressing derogatory/belittling remarks towards a referee.
- g. Pervasive action that belittles or undermines a referee’s authority or is intended to cast doubt upon the referee.

Penalties

Penalties for Referee abuse and assault will be governed by the Laws of the Game, US Soccer Policy 531-9, Section 5, US Soccer Severity of Misconduct Matrix, NYSWYSA Prohibited Conduct Policy & MAAPP.

Additional Resources:

- a. [USSF Policy 531-9](#)
- b. [NYSWYSA MAAPP Policy](#)
- c. [531-9 Misconduct Matrix](#)

-End of Document-

Revised December 4, 2024